Introduction to EA Processing Changes

Electronic Attendance (EA) was introduced in an attempt to provide an easier method for vendors to provide regional centers with attendance information for all contract services they provide. As the process was introduced to people and such things as security concerns were discussed, new issues arose and the process became more and more complicated. Some things were not thoroughly addressed and eventually, regional centers became concerned that there was too much work for the process to be used.

Then DDS took over Habilitation Services from the Department of Rehabilitation. In order for shared groups to have attendance reported to different regional centers when the consumers worked together, the DS1964 form was developed and to upload it, the EA process was used. Now all regional centers are using the EA process, even those that had no contracted services.

Based on what we have learned from our experience, we have attempted to make the entire process easier for regional centers and for vendors. Effective November, 2003, all regional centers are required to report attendance for services for EACH CONSUMER, so by now, either the regional center should be using the Electronic Billing process for the collection of attendance data, or they should be using EA. Further, every regional center, even those that don't otherwise have contracted services, should be reporting attendance for group habilitation. So, we hope that this new process will make everyone's job easier.

Below are sections that will address questions you might have. If you are interested in know what the differences are, what new documentation or instructions are available, or what information has been updated, you should find your answer below. It is recommended that you read this document first to get an overview of the changes and how this will affect you and the work you are required to do to ensure vendors are paid.

<u>**WHY DID WE CREATE THE NEW EA PROCESSING.XLS FILE**</u>

It was reported to us by ARCA that regional centers were unhappy with the time it took to process files and the tedious steps that must be performed repeatedly to process invoices. In addition, we were contacted by two separate vendors who were concerned about the reporting requirements. The new EA_Processing.xls file provides regional centers with several new features:

1) You may now process 2 (soon to be 3) different types of files using only the EA_Processing.xls file (you are no longer required to keep track of separate processing files);
2) You are not limited to 1 file at a time and can process up to 10 files at once when sending created files to a vendor or 15 files when receiving files from a vendor;
3) There are now fewer steps required within Excel that means it will be easier to train new personnel in the processing of EA claims;
4) With changes in the AS400, you will encounter fewer errors and you should be able to select problem invoices while accepting all invoices that ARE ready for processing.
5) While the 'EA_Processing.xls' file will require updates in the future, you should be able to continue use of all processes even when CADDIS is implemented, meaning that no more vendor training or RC processing changes will be required.

<u>**WHAT STEPS HAVE BEEN ELIMINATED**</u>

Some steps could not be eliminated. We currently required that a batch process be run to upload a file to the AS400 and that the file, once loaded, be 'checked' (using option # 30 on the ATMENU) before the file is 'welcomed' to the AS400 (using Option # 50 on the ATMENU). You still must run the batch processes to upload or download files. However, within Excel, some steps are easier:

1) You are no longer required to download a single file at a time;
2) In the past, you had to open all files you were using and then could only save one file at a time – you can now, with the press of one button, create and save files for multiple vendors;
3) When accepting files, you do not have to type the name of the selected file EXACTLY as the file name was in order to process…you need only hold the control key and select files;

<u>**WHAT CHANGES HAVE BEEN MADE TO THE DOCUMENTS ON THE WEB**</u>

The entire Electronic Attendance and Habilitation Information sections have been reviewed in an attempt to leave you with only the information you need and to see that the information is updated. For example:

1) The 'Vendorfile Macros_route1.xls' file and the 'Hab_Processing.xls' files have both been replaced with the new 'EA_Processing.xls' file;

2) The 'Quick Reference' has been updated to match current requirements and has been separated into a section for preparing files to be sent to the vendors and a section for receiving files from a vendor.
3) The Vendor Letter has been removed (though it is still available on request – it had been used by some regional centers as a 'starting point' for announcing the EA Process to the vendors);
4) The processing instructions have been updated.
5) The instructions for the vendor have been updated. Please review and use or adapt this form as you see fit. It may help your job become easier. By providing these instructions to all your vendors, you will allow them less room to say, "I didn't know."

WHAT CHANGES LIE AHEAD

The biggest news may be that larger vendors, with their own billing systems, will soon be able to provide you with a 'data file' that can be automatically processed just as you would an individual EA file (now referred to as CAFÉ V) or the DS1964 forms. Testing has been done, but some changes will be required as recent changes to the file layout needed to be done. This file will not only serve to provide attendance information to the regional centers, but will also serve as the method for reporting monitoring data for habilitation services. One vendor said that it took them 3 days to complete the DS1971 forms alone. With this new process, after some work to set up the file creation, the vendors should be able to complete their DS1964s, DS1971s, and DS1972 all in a matter of minutes.

Because of this, the 'EA_Processing.xls' file will require an update. A revision date now appears on the 'Instructions' Sheet of the 'EA_Processing.xls' file. The date of this file (as it now stands), is February 14, 2005. There will be 2 changes to this file in the future, and each version will show a new revised date. The first will be adjustments to the file when a file layout has been determined for the 'data file' format for the larger vendors. A second change will occur when CADDIS begins to get implemented so centers will not need to change their process and the EA_Processing.xls fill will automatically provide you a file layout required for CADDIS.

Some regional centers have found it easiest to have their Information Technology areas process files and then pass the information to the fiscal/accounting areas for payment. Because this process will require more analytical review of the files, regional centers might consider allowing files to be processed by individuals more familiar with invoice processing.

CONCLUSION

It is recommended that you review the new instructions before processing. Also, before processing real invoices, select a couple invoices to process and run them through option # 30, so you can see the report. For these test files, you should then 'reject' all lines of the file. The AST helpdesk can be contacted with questions at (916) 654-1466.